



## Hearn Veterinary Services

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## Horses Can Make You Sick

Horses and barns have traditionally been viewed as wholesome, healthy, agricultural environments where there was next to no risk of contracting serious diseases. This remains true for 98% of the human population. However, barns and horses also host many types of bacteria, viruses, fungi and other organisms that can be transmitted and cause mild disease in healthy individuals and serious disease in immunosuppressed people (cancer patients, hospitalized individuals, elderly and neonates). Everyone who works or visits barns should be aware of this problem, because they may inadvertently act as vectors, and carry the organisms from the horse / barn to a family member or friend who doesn't have the immunity to handle the challenge. Examples of transmissible diseases immunosuppressed humans can contact from horses include: Salmonella and Clostridium from diarrhea cases, Leptospirosis from urine, Ringworm from skin infections, Rhodococcus and Streptococcus pneumoniae from respiratory cases, Streptococcus zooepidemicus from respiratory and uterine infections, Escherichia coli from feces, and MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus) from wounds and the nasal passages of some normal horses (asymptomatic carriers).

## Steps to Minimize the Transmission of Organisms between Horses and Humans

### Entering the Barn

- Wash your hands when you enter the barn in the morning.
- When working in the barn it is important to remember to keep your hands away from your face (eyes, nose and mouth).

### Foals (Less than 6 months of age)

- Wash your hands and glove before touching the nose, mouth, tail or taking the temperature of any newborn foals.
- Discard gloves before handling a different foal.

### Wounds

- When cleaning and dressing wounds or a surgical incision, always wear gloves and wash hands before and after treating the wound.

### Diarrhea Cases

- Always wear gloves and wash hands immediately after contact with a horse with diarrhea.
- Wear plastic boots to enter the stall and leave them at the door when exiting the stall.
- Assign one thermometer to each horse receiving temperature monitoring or disinfect thermometers with alcohol after each use.

### Medicating Horses

- Wear gloves when administering oral medications.
- Assign one dosing syringe to each horse receiving oral meds – do not exchange syringes between horses.

### Leaving the Barn

- Wash your hands before leaving the barn.
- Clean or change your boots.

### Shower and Change Your Clothes before visiting Friends

- Before going to visit any friends who are elderly, hospitalized or have young babies, take the time to have a shower and change your clothes and shoes.

**\*\* These precautions are necessary to protect you, your family and your friends against infectious diseases as well as to limit the spread of disease between horses.**